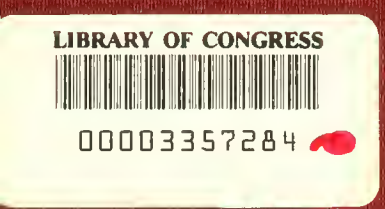
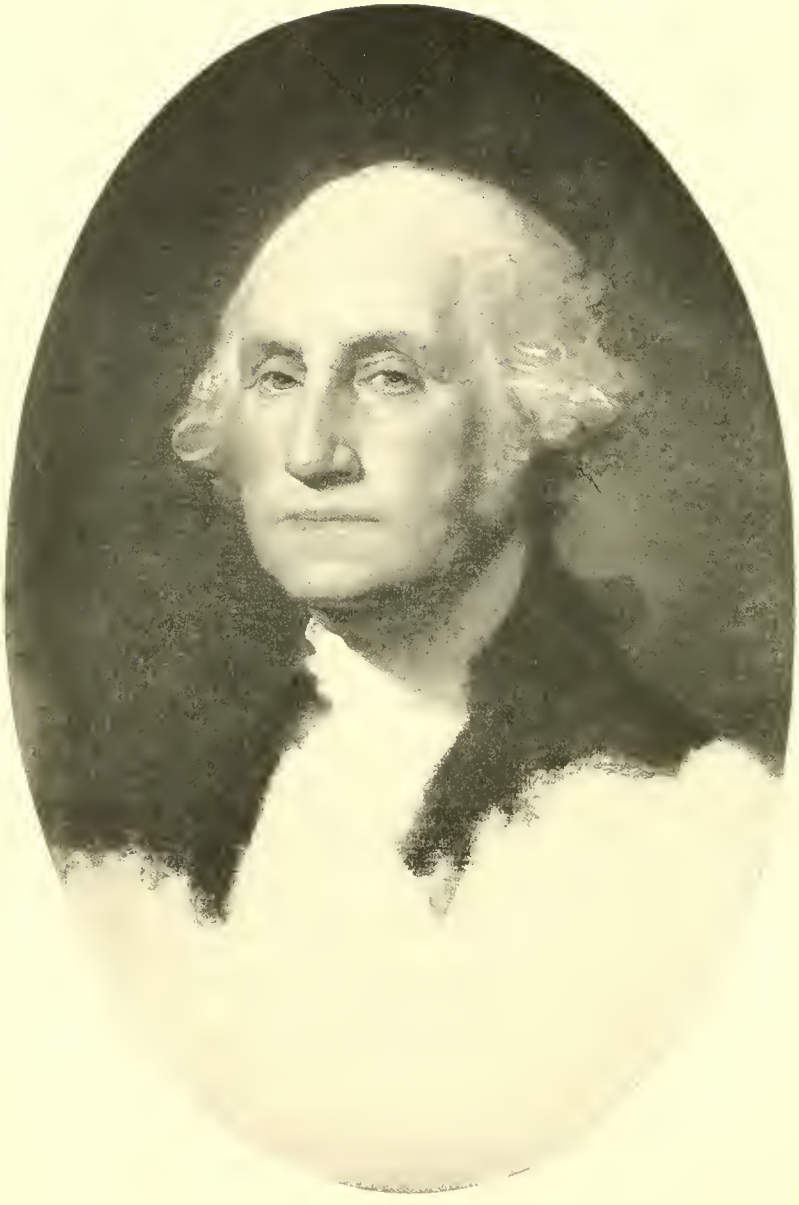


The Story of Washington

Washington



THE STORY *of* WASHINGTON

by

Virginia Heath

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The Story *of* Washington

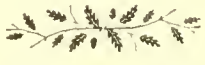
A Reverie

SOME day, perhaps, you will journey to Mount Vernon, George Washington's country home. You will find many people there, all visitors like yourself. Probably you will follow them through the wide doors of the banquet room, down the long porch to the reception hall, and over its polished stairs to the floor above. You will surely be interested in the quaint draperies and curiously carved furniture of the different rooms. After this you will be wise to rest awhile in one of the many chairs scattered over the broad veranda.

By and by the others of your company disappear. You see only the soft green of the lawn against a background of majestic trees with the

historic Potomac shining at their feet. It is pleasant sitting there, but you are not long permitted to enjoy it alone; for, presently, you hear the sharp ring of hoofs upon the gravelled path, and a magnificent white horse dashes up to the door and stands, with arching neck, for his rider to dismount. Then a very splendid gentleman, booted and spurred, wearing a blue coat with brilliant epaulets, buff colored small-clothes, and a three-cornered hat with a black cockade, walks slowly up the stairs and enters the doorway at your right. And the name of this fine gentleman? Why, what else could it be but that of our hero, George Washington himself, — a stately figure, called from the shadowy past to live once more in the present by the mysterious charm of the place and the power of your own free fancy.

The picture is so real that you linger for a time to gaze at the open door through which the vision vanished. But it does not come again, so you turn away to wander at will over the plantation; and as you walk under the shadow of the trees, and look down upon the river that Washington loved, there may come back to you, dimly, like a half-forgotten dream, some little memory of this story of his life.



"A magnificent white horse dashes up to the door and stands, with arching neck, for his rider to dismount"

From Child to Colonel

WE must not think of Mount Vernon as the scene of our hero's childhood, for his father's estate lay some distance down the river. The Twenty-second of February was not kept then with all the noise and fun with which we now celebrate it. Yet it was a day of rejoicing in the old Virginia farm-house, for then, in the year seventeen hundred thirty-two, a little boy, the Washington of our story, was born.

While he was still a baby, his father moved to another plantation near Fredericksburg. The new home overlooked the Rappahannock, about which Washington played as a child. We can imagine how eagerly, with the other boys of his age, he watched the English ships creep up the river after their cargoes of tobacco. There were no regular mails in those days, and one heard but seldom from the outside world. The arrival of the ships was a great event, for they brought with them wonderful tales of cities and men.

Each plantation was a little village in itself, with the planter's house for a center. Beyond were the negro cabins and vast fields of tobacco.

In the midst of life like this Washington grew into sturdy boyhood. He was a handsome youth, tall and straight, and so easily the equal of his playmates that he soon became a leader in their outdoor sports. He entered heartily into every youthful amusement, but the years allowed him for play were few. For at the age when boys are now busy with

An Indian Chief at Washington's time

football and tennis, this lad of fifteen was hard at work. He was sent by his friend, Lord Fairfax, to survey a large tract of land lying along the Shenandoah valley. It was rough work for a beginner, for the country was then a wilderness. But the life had an amusing side, as we learn from the diary which Washington kept at that time.

"March 23d. Rained till about 2 o'clock and then cleared up, when we were greatly surprised at the sight of more than thirty Indians coming from war with only one scalp. We had some liquor with us, of which we gave them a part. This, elevating their spirits, put them in the humor of dancing. We then had a war dance. After clearing a large space and making a great fire in the middle, the men seated themselves around it and the speaker made a grand speech, telling them in what manner they were to dance. After he had finished, the best dancer jumped up, as one awaked from sleep, and ran and jumped about the ring in a most comical manner. He was followed by the rest. Then began their music which was performed with a pot half full of water and a deer skin stretched tight over it, and a gourd with some shot in it to rattle, and a piece of horse's tail tied to it to make it look fine. One person kept rattling and another drumming all the while they were dancing."

What boy of to-day would not be glad to leave his play for so exciting an adventure!

These few lines from his own pen bring us very near the youth of Washington. We catch a glimpse of the boyish spirit, which found something to enjoy even in the midst of hardship. Nor was the work neglected. On the contrary, it was so well done that, on his return, he was chosen county surveyor. Many of the surveys of his boyhood are still in use, because even now no better ones can be made.

We may go to our histories to learn of the French and Indian War, in which Washington began to be a soldier. A story so brief as this can give only a hint here and there of important events.

We come now to a time in our hero's life that is far removed from war and Indians. It whispers instead of peace and home. A very gay and brilliant time it must have been, for it was Washington's wedding day; and a wedding in old Virginia was worth going far to see. This one was celebrated with unusual pomp in the little church of Saint Peter, near the bride's home. All the gentry of the neighborhood were present. The Governor, in full dress of scarlet and gold, with officers of the army and navy in gorgeous uniforms, gave color to the scene. To complete this pretty picture of old time splendor, we have the bride in silk and satin, laces and brocade, with diamond buckles on her slippers, and pearls about her neck and in her hair. By her side stands the gallant figure of young Colonel Washington in blue and silver trimmed with scarlet, with gold buckles at his knee and on his shoes. After the ceremony the bride and her ladies were taken home in a coach and six, attended by the bride-

" Its curious old rooms were brightened by the presence of Lady Washington who usually spent the winter months in camp "

groom on his spirited horse, and followed by the other gentlemen of the party.

This is a bit of real life, but it sounds — does it not? — like a stray leaf from some old fairy tale. And isn't it delightful to know that our prince and princess did, in very truth, live happily for many years on their beautiful Mount Vernon estate? It gives the place a new claim on our attention to remember that it was once the home of so distinguished

"The spacious mansion of to-day"

a woman as Mrs. Washington — or Lady Washington, as she came to be called. And the presence there to-day of the little articles connected with the daily life of its mistress adds to that home a touch of human interest which might otherwise be lacking. Trifling things they are indeed — the silver heel of her slipper, a shred of lace she wore, an exquisitely carved fan, the quaint pin cushion made from her wedding gown — but they help to bridge over the years that lie between her day and ours, and make more real to us this bride of long ago.

The home over which she presided with such grace and charm was one of lavish hospitality. Guests from far and near sat often at its table. Washington has been called a silent man, but he enjoyed a houseful of people, and made a most agreeable host. He was fond of music and dancing, and liked a game of cards; but his chief amusement was hunting. Three times a week, during the season, a merry company, headed by Washington on his favorite Blueskin, was off at daybreak. Frequently, the ladies led by Lady Washington in a scarlet habit joined the hunt. The footing was rough, and sometimes so dangerous that timid riders chose the longer and safer course, but Washington kept with the hounds. These dogs, Vulcan and Ringwood, Singer and Truelove, Music and Sweetlips, were noted for speed and endurance.

The master of Mount Vernon had an especial fondness for both horses and dogs. His first duty each morning was to visit the stables and kennels. Every department of the place received his careful attention. Throughout his whole life it was characteristic of the man to do whatever he had to do as well as he possibly could.

He gave himself to the management of the large estate with the same thoroughness that had marked the surveys of his boyhood. It was no uncommon thing for him to spend the entire day in the saddle in order to superintend in person some important detail. Thus with work enough but with leisure also for fine friendships and wholesome recreation, Washington lived for a time the free and pleasant life of a Southern gentleman of his day.

"The beautiful elm under which Washington took command of the army may yet be seen in the city of Cambridge"

Commander-in-Chief

MEANWHILE, over in England, a new King had taken the throne. Under his rule the mother country was trying, in one way and another, to force upon the colonists certain laws which the latter believed to be unfair. A sense of coming trouble was everywhere felt. Washington was never so occupied with his own affairs as to forget the larger interests of his country. He now waited anxiously for news from the North. By and by out in Boston Harbor there was the queerest of all queer tea parties, at which no one drank any tea. After this tea was no longer served at Mount Vernon.

Perhaps King George would have been wiser if he had looked a little deeper into the meaning of that Boston Tea Party. It may be he did not appreciate the free spirit of the men who were its guests, or know they were standing for a principle that was just. At any rate the King was angry, and swore the colonists should be compelled to submit. He sent his ships and armies over to enforce the hated laws. Then began the long struggle in which England lost her colonies.

It was two years after this, however, before the first American army was organized, and there was open war. Every schoolboy knows about the skirmish between the British and American troops on the green at Lexington. He recalls with pride how bravely the American soldiers fought at Bunker Hill, the first real battle of the Revolution.

"How bravely the American soldiers fought at Bunker Hill"

Just at this time the trumpet-call of duty rang sharp and clear in the ears of Washington. When a commander-in-chief was needed, all eyes turned naturally to the great Virginian. Without a moment's hesitation he accepted the trust laid upon him. The beautiful elm under which Washington took command of the army may yet be seen in the city of Cambridge. Tall and stately, like the man who drew his sword beneath its branches, this tree stands a little apart from its fellows, as if it still remembered the proud distinction of its youth. Of historical interest also is the Craigie house where the Commander-in-chief made his head-quarters. This has since become familiar to us as the home of the poet Longfellow.

The task upon which Washington now entered proved long and hard. Before it was finished he had reason to be grateful for the physical strength which the vigorous outdoor life of his youth had given him. His knowledge of military affairs gained in the French and Indian war was also of great service. But even more he needed all the courage and stoutness of heart which forty-three years of noble living had woven into his character.

When Washington took command, the army was almost wholly lacking in discipline. The men were poorly clothed, and there was no money for new uniforms. Worst of all the supply of gunpowder gave out. These were only a few of the many difficulties which the new commander had to face. One by one he met and overcame them.

In the early spring he was able to send a large body of troops to fortify Dorchester Heights. This movement drove the British out of

"Craigie house where the Commander-in-chief made his headquarters."

Boston, and gave safety to New England. When the American army marched in triumph into the city, its citizens gave the name of "Washington" to the long narrow street that winds in and out through the heart of the busy town.

We know that during the next summer a deep gloom settled over the country. The army was driven from one position to another. Then like a flash of light came the victory at Trenton. In this battle

the Americans took nearly one thousand prisoners, besides guns and ammunition. It occurred on the night of December twenty-fifth, when in so many homes the Christmas fires were lighted, and happy hearts were celebrating the birthday of the Christ. There was merriment also in the British camp at Trenton, but nine miles up the river, among the soldiers who had crossed the icy current of the Delaware, was heard neither song nor laughter. There a determined leader, with twenty-four hundred resolute men, was marching through the sleet of a winter storm to strike a blow for freedom. It stirs the blood even now to read of a deed so brave.

"Among the soldiers who crossed the icy current of the Delaware, was heard neither song nor laughter"

The following summer brought defeat to the American troops at Brandywine. Later, in an attack on the British camp at Germantown, they were forced to retreat with heavy loss.

The country was again in despair, when Washington led his ragged army into winter quarters at Valley Forge. The Commander-in-chief alone remained firm. Through all those dreadful days his courage never faltered. To the enemy he showed the same unbending will, but toward his hungry barefoot men his heart was always tender. He did all that lay in his power to relieve their sufferings. The hardships of that winter were severe, but the discipline was so good, that in the spring, a well-trained army was ready for the field.

At this point in the story, it is interesting to note the entrance of our French allies upon the scene. Let us not forget our debt of gratitude to France for the aid she gave our country in her time of need. The brave Frenchman, Lafayette, is one of the most picturesque figures in the history of the war. A lover of liberty, this young patriot came to America and made her cause his own. Now when success seemed doubtful, he returned for a brief period to France, hoping by personal appeal to secure further help from that country.

Meanwhile Washington watched and waited. He saw that the nation's life depended on the preservation of the army. To hold the troops together became his chief purpose. He set himself sternly to the task. Nothing could turn him from it. When Congress failed to provide food and clothing for the destitute soldiers, their commander's honest wrath shamed it to greater effort. Never to satisfy the popular cry for

action did he risk the safety of the army. He fought only when, in his judgment, the hour to fight had come.

There were many men whose deeds light with their splendor the darkness of that time. Washington was the greatest of them all. Looking to him the weary army found patience to endure, until, on the soil of his own State, he led it to final victory. Besieged by two armies on land, with a French fleet cutting off his escape by water, Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown, in the year seventeen hundred eighty-one. Marching with drooping colors between two long lines of American and French troops, seven thousand British soldiers laid down their arms. The United Colonies of America had won their independence.

The war was really over, though the colonists did not know it then. A British General still held New York when the American army went into winter quarters at Newburgh on the Hudson. The stone house then occupied by Washington is now owned by the State of New York. Its curious old rooms were once the scene of many a brilliant company. They were brightened by the presence of Lady Washington who usually spent the winter months in camp. The time seemed long to the waiting troops. The news that the treaty of peace had finally been signed was hailed with joy by both officers and men. In a few simple words Washington said good-bye to his devoted army.

Then he turned southward and reached Mount Vernon on Christmas Eve. Its doors were flung wide open to receive him. There was a beautiful Southern custom which gave the slaves Christmas week for merry-making. From the cabins came the hum of happy voices and

"Winter quarters at Newburgh on the Hudson"

the sound of dancing feet. The house which had so long been darkened was ablaze with light, for the master was at home.

He entered with eager interest into all its duties and pleasure. Under his careful eye, work which during his absence had been somewhat neglected, went briskly on. With Lady Washington he often

visited in Alexandria. There he attended divine service. One feels grateful to the people of this town for having left unchanged his family pew in Christ Church. Old neighbors gathered once more about

"There he attended divine service"

"Lafayette, an honored guest, came to renew the friendship of former years."

his fireside. Lafayette, an honored guest, came to renew the friendship of former years.

The home-like simplicity of earlier days was no longer possible at Mount Vernon. Its owner had become famous. Artists begged permission to paint his portrait. The French sculptor, Houdon, began the statue which stands in the State House at Richmond. Everyone wanted to see the great American. All were graciously received, but the house was too small to provide suitably for their comfort. Washington himself

"The statue which stands in the State House at Richmond"

planned the additions which made the "Cottage," as he called it, into the spacious mansion of to-day. On the Christmas following its completion, there was a gay house-warming to which old and young were invited.

These years of home life passed swiftly by. Each one found Washington better fitted for the position he was yet to fill. We all know what that position was. The people were glad to choose him for their President. They loved and trusted him. His journey to New York was one long march of triumph. The men and women of the towns through which he rode hastened to do him honor. Even the children brought their tribute of flowers. When he arrived in New York the guns in the harbor thundered a salute.

Standing on the balcony of Federal Hall, in the presence of the Senate and House of Representatives, he took the oath of office. Gravely, with a deep sense of what the act implied, he stooped to kiss the open Bible that lay before him. When he turned to face the multitude in the streets below, the people cried, "LONG LIVE GEORGE WASHINGTON, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES." In the faith they gave him there was no shadow of doubt. They believed he would lead them safely through the difficulties which beset them on every side. In the days that followed he proved himself worthy of this trust. He was as faithful to his country in time of peace as he had been prompt to answer her call to battle. Through eight years of public life, he stood at the head of the nation he had helped to make. Then he retired to the welcome quiet of his home.

The visitor in New York enters Washington Square from Fifth Avenue under the Centennial Arch, placed there in eighteen hundred eighty-nine, to mark the passing of a century since George Washington became our first President.

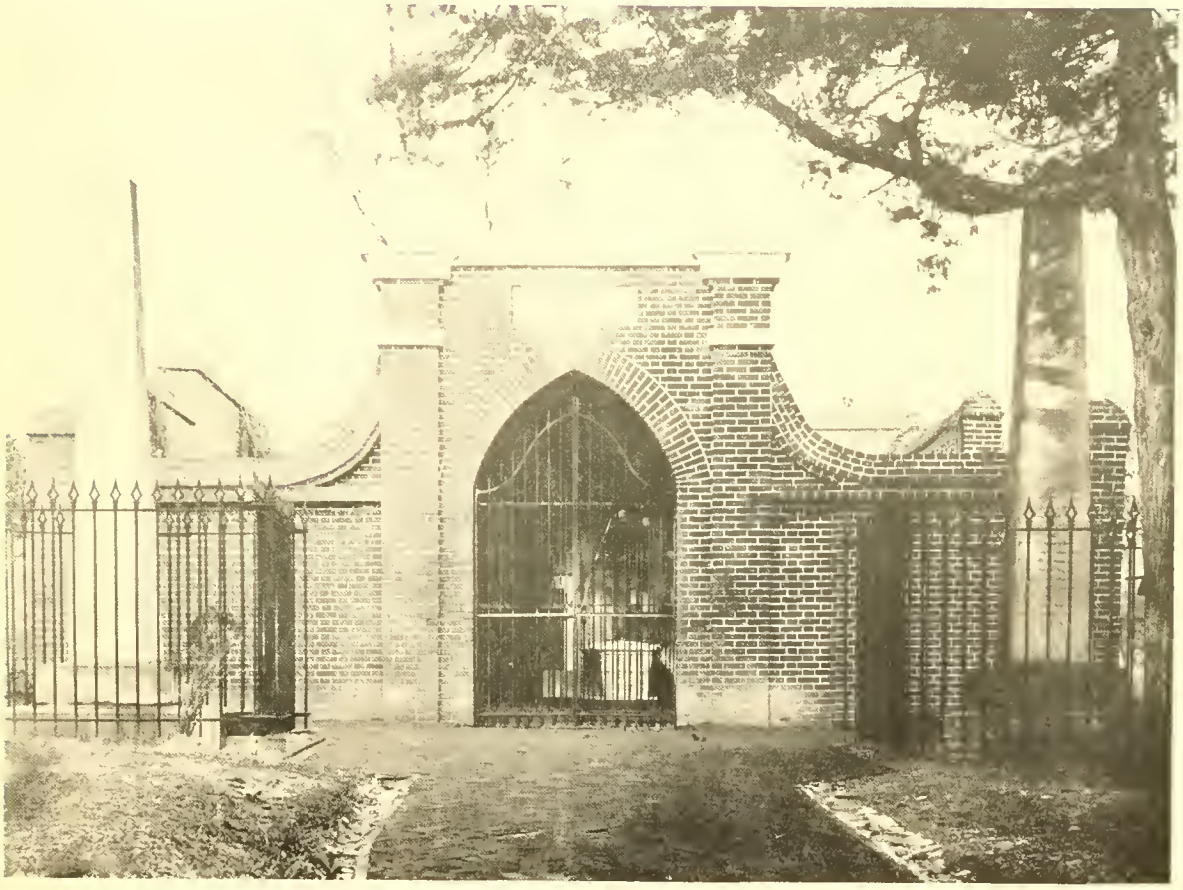
"To mark the passing of a century"

"A shaft of purest marble"

In other parts of the country, statues and monuments have been erected to his memory. Surpassing them all in simple grandeur, a shaft of purest marble watches over the city that bears his name.

The Journey's End

Returning past the house by the lower walk lying between river and lawn, you come to the Tomb of Washington. One steps softly here, and it is very still. The heavy doors are closed. No one is allowed to enter. But the summer winds steal in and out, and sometimes a ray of sunlight lies across the floor. On the wall opposite the door you notice the words, "I AM THE RESURRECTION, AND THE LIFE: HE THAT BELIEVETH IN ME, THOUGH HE WERE DEAD, YET SHALL HE LIVE." When the writer of the story visited this spot, it was early spring, — the nesting time of birds. One brave mother, wiser than her neighbors, had chosen the narrow shelf below the inscription for her summer home. The visitor thought, as she turned to come away, that when she should recall the beauty of the scene, it would be pleasant to remember also the little bird, sitting within the shelter of that silent place upon her pretty nest.



"One steps softly here, and it is very still"

Washington

As hero, soldier, statesman, the world bows at thy feet.
And yet one leaf is needed to make thy wreath complete.
Jealous as other men of thy enduring fame,
With hearts as truly loyal, we choose the simpler name;—
Thy country's honored Father thou evermore shalt be,
Teaching that country's children how to be nobly free.
God help them now to learn, in the spring-time of their youth,
To stand as firm as thou for Liberty and Truth.